

562 into its heart. Back in the werf, while the meat was being cut up and distributed by
[462] /Qui's wife's brothers, he slept exhausted on the mound of black and white plumes
[224] and the women, some of the plumes in their hair, danced a dance of praise around
him. This is the role of /Kung men and the way it should be.

● 157 By comparison with the men, the women are considerably more circumscribed in
562 knowledge, less ready for new experience, more suspicious and apprehensive of
strangers. They draw back and seem on the whole somewhat timid. The men protect
them in many ways. They would not let the women ride with us in the truck, for
instance, unless some of the men were with them.

The women expect the dependent role. They have their say in conversation but
do not take part in the serious conclaves of the men, saying often, 'The men know
these things. We do not know. The men must decide.' And one woman said, 'A man
can do everything—shoot and make fire.' /Kung women are encouraged to be
compliant by the fact that, in their love of peace, the /Kung like quiet, modest,
gentle women. Overbearing, strident, demanding, or nagging women would disturb
not only their own husbands but the whole werf. Disapproval of anyone's behaviour
[626] is expressed by the group in talk, and also by songs, such as the song of *The Two*
Baus, which was composed about two loudly quarrelsome co-wives. When the two
Baus heard this song strummed on the *//guashi* or hummed here and there in the
shadows of the werf at night, they mended their ways.

562 Though the /Kung like gentleness and compliance in women, their society does
not impose extreme forms of obedience or subservience upon them and women are
not ill treated. One man told Laurence Marshall that if he wanted to go somewhere
and his wife wanted to go somewhere else he might have to talk, talk, talk, talk, talk,
talk to persuade her.

562 We once saw a woman strike her husband on the head with her digging-stick in
593 a fit of frustration because he had coerced her to go with him when she wanted to
remain visiting her parents. He had coerced her swiftly and decisively by snatching
her baby from her arms and walking ahead with it. In a flash the wife ran a few steps
and hit him, then she went around in a circle, stamping her feet in great, high stamps
like an enraged samurai in a Japanese print, then she followed her husband. I personally
never saw a /Kung man hit a woman. This is not to say no /Kung ever did,
but it is far from common.

The dominance of the /Kung men is more protective and life-giving than crushing
to the women. On the whole a good balance seems to be attained and there is a
notable freedom from quarrelling between husbands and wives. The instances of
strife that we have mentioned are exceptional breaks in the usual peace of their well-
adjusted human relations.

[20 cont.]

[101] the half-breed Bushmen, the Otjituo group. The Gam supposed-
[131] ly dwell in the region west of the Omatako valley from
Okanakasewa to Omambonde. The most serious complaints are
[648] lodged against the western group, which, in the opinion of the
[631] District Office, is for the most part under a single head chief,
the notorious Namagorub, and is called !Kung-au (that is, !Kung
people) by the other Bushmen. The Karakuwisa chiefs, Gnani
and Ma, both crippled, are worth mentioning, and further, the
leaders of the burglars of Blockfontein, Gachu and his brother
Tamburi; no one, however, has as much power as the notori-
ous Namagorub."

According to Vedder, the Bushman tribe of the Masi-
[197] Keren live in the forests south of the Otjimpolo Veld. They do
[342] not understand the !Kung language; they live communally in
[301] large rectangular houses and make incisions in the upper thigh
[827] in order to be able to run better. Their arrows have large iron
[411] points that are not poisoned.

2. On their Character

● 157 In character, the Bushmen differ among themselves just
as much as the members of any other people. The various types
of disposition already point to this fact. In view of the relatively
brief period that I was able to spend with the individual Bush-
men, I do not want to give too much significance to individual
characteristics. The character of a people, if one can speak
of such, [21] manifests itself in the average conventional or tra-
ditional kind of reaction in different situations, and, in spite of
the physically conditioned differences in character, this kind of
reaction nonetheless displays a certain broad uniformity.

[114] Since among the other Bushman tribes my observations
were less detailed, I shall report everything worthwhile that I
observed here.

When he is confronted with something new, the Bush-
man at first acts relatively uninterested. He has little curiosity.
On the other hand, two !Kung Bushmen did once demand of me
a detailed explanation of the motor, and they listened patiently
to my account. When an American once gave a phonograph
concert, they listened to it with obvious pleasure, but none of

[21 cont.]

- 157 them thought of asking a question about it. The Bushmen of today at least do not believe that any kind of magic is concealed
- [177] in the Europeans' machines. They learn to use European instruments fairly quickly; in particular, they soon become familiar with the rifle. Dornan reported that there was a large number of improvised rifles that the Bushmen had adapted. In a new environment, the Bushman is wholly self-possessed and coolly observant. He is highly adaptable. The girls, of whom a number are kept by farmers as concubines, are quite skillful at housekeeping. In Ovamboland they quickly adopt the living
- [177] habits and economic activities of the Bantu. An Ongandjera Bushman acts as an instructor at the teacher's college in Oonipa. He owns a small kraal that is well-maintained in Ovambo fashion and, in addition, has built himself a round hut of tiles in which
- [648] he keeps his "library." They seldom stay long on the farms, but
- [147] probably in the main because the food does not agree with them.
- 609 The Bushmen are most distrustful of other people. Every armed person whom they encounter is regarded from the outset as an enemy. The Bushman is allowed to enter the regions of other tribes only if he is unarmed. Even along the edge of the farm zone the mutual distrust is so great that a Bushman who has been sent to a farm as a messenger dares not leave the road, which is regarded as a neutral zone, if another kin group has settled in the vicinity. If two armed Bushmen who are strangers approach each other, they disarm at first sight before they greet each other. When a Bushman comes to a village or to a farmhouse, he will put down his arms at a certain distance and sit down to wait patiently, if need be for hours, until he is questioned. A distinct sense of race is not apparent. Everything that does not belong to one's own kin group is regarded as strange, even hostile, except when common persecution causes a sense of solidarity to spring up among all those who are persecuted. At the same time, they very clearly possess a kind of sense of humanity as a whole, that is, they do not believe that they are the only people, and they are convinced, for example, that the people of all races are received in the heavenly house. Their
- 602 conduct toward relatives is regulated by numerous customs, but in general it is formal and almost ceremonial, even toward the
- 186
609
6543} wife and children. The Bushman is never importunate.
- [157]

[21 cont.]

648 The Bushmen as a whole are despised by the other peoples, but in individual cases they are feared, and not least by the Whites. The Bushmen are familiar with this attitude and conduct themselves accordingly.

797 The Bushmen accept a foreign point of view only with
177 great difficulty, if at all. The mission, accordingly, can show no noteworthy success among them. On the other hand, they usually grasp the intentions of others more quickly than the ordinarily more superficial Blacks. Consequently, they give brief and precise answers to the questions put to them. When asked questions that they do not want to answer, they remain silent. At the same time, in dealings with them one should note that they tire very quickly when they have to do mental work, and then they will not answer further questions, not because they do not want to, but because they are too tired.

181 The Bushmen are not generous. Nevertheless, allow-
[57] ing a stranger to partake of a meal, as well as giving him some
609 of the available water, is wholly matter-of-course with them.

[43] They very rarely, however, give any of their personal belongings, weapons, ornaments, hides, and so forth, as presents. If they themselves receive presents, they are obviously delighted.

181 It is true that they do not express their gratitude with words,
577 [22] but anyone who does the Bushmen a kindness may be sure that they will manifest their gratitude by deeds to the point of self-sacrifice.

To help a fellow human being who is in trouble is a moral obligation. There is a report of a prospector who lost his
[648] way in the bush forest and was then saved by the Bushmen, with whom he could not even converse; they took care of him for several days and finally put him on the right path.

Agreements and promises are kept unconditionally by the Bushman, although it is true that he usually arrives a little too late. Once, when an ox from the ox-cart of the Catholic mission had to be left behind on the way to the Okovanggo, it was put in the care of the Bushmen and they were to deliver it at the time of the next full moon. The people kept their word, and the ox was delivered, well-fed, at the specified time.

As a comrade, the Bushman is reliable and faithful (1).

[22 cont.]

114 without compromising oneself. Only old people are suitable
124 informants, since they are no longer eager for renown.

831 In view of the hard life that the people lead, sexuality,
naturally, is not excessively developed. Perverse manipulations
are evidently unknown, since my informants did not even under-
stand questions on this subject.

833 Normal sexual intercourse is usually performed in the
bush during the time between the evening meal and the rising
271 of the moon. Long periods of thirst result in almost total im-
147 potency.

● 157 Despite all the formality, they have an unbridled
578 temperament which frequently expresses itself in violent emo-
tional explosions over trivial affairs, which then may easily lead
to serious consequences since the poisoned arrow is always at
hand. For example, I was told the following story: A Bushman
worked on a farm for quite a long time and, with his belly fat
from eating maize, came to visit his thin companions. His
brother made fun of him for being so fat, saying that he could
not run any more, whereupon the fat one retorted: "Just the
same, I'll live longer than you." After this brief exchange of
words, the scrawny brother stabbed the fat one. -- A film com-
157 pany once wanted to make a film among the !Kung who are
648 settled behind Keibeb; the film was to be called: "When the
First Whites Came into the Land." The chief of this horde had
a [23] pair of old German military trousers as an emblem of his
office and when he was requested to take them off, he responded
with the declaration that he would take off his trousers only if
the White did the same, whereupon he received a box on the
ears that put him and his companions in such a rage that the
film company preferred to depart in order to avoid a catastrophe.
157 That they can also be quick at repartee is shown by the following
story which was repeatedly told to me by Europeans: A Bushman
had been accused of poaching. The magistrate asked him:
"Don't you know that these animals belong to the king (royal
game)?" The Bushman answered: "I saw no 'brand' (property
mark)."

[593] As a chief or family head, the Bushman is bossy and
unyielding, which is understandable in view of the rigidity of
his whole conception of life. The sick Bushmen lie silent and

[753] 23 cont.] THE SICK BUSHMEN LIE SILENT AND
 157 patient, but a case of illness in a village upsets all its members,
 partly out of compassion, and partly out of fear of the spirits of
 sickness. The modes of conduct that I have described already per-
 mit certain conclusions concerning the structure of the psychologi-
 cal personality among the Bushmen. It is certainly impossible to
 compare the mental set of an intellectualized, highly domesti-
 cated European with that of these primitive hunters. There is
 absolutely no difference, however, between the simple European
 and the natives in their conception of life and their manner of
 105 reacting to environmental influences. As I have already explained
 152 in another place, we may speak of a law of inertia in cultural
 development (1). The primitive man is perfectly aware, perhaps

1. V. Lebzelter, "Persönlichkeit und
 Weltanschauung bei den Eingeborenen
 Südwestafrikas Jahrbuch der Österreichischen
 Leogesellschaft, 1932.

instinctively, perhaps by tradition, that the quantity of energy
 possessed by every individual is limited and that each expenditure
 of energy means wear on the life machine and, hence, the shorten-
 ing of life. The individual, therefore, strives to attain, with the
 least possible expenditure of energy, what to his mind represents an
 optimal adaptation to the conditions of life, and to maintain this
 state of adaptation with the least possible expenditure of energy.
 The great difference between European civilization and many
 primitive cultures, including that of the Bushmen, lies in the fact
 that European culture as a whole finds itself in an unstable condi-
 tion, which makes the attainment of an optimal state of adapta-
 tion possible to only a few of its members. Bushman culture, on
 the other hand, represents an optimal state of adaptation that can
 be automatically attained by each individual Bushman. In its
 way, therefore, it is more perfect than ours. No other people and
 no other race, given the same technical means and the same en-
 vironmental conditions, could achieve a better adaptation. One
 can even speak of such an adaptation with respect to the spiritual
 culture. The life of the Bushman is made secure in this life

[24 cont.]

- 522 they had never seen any. A certain dry humor spiced their con-
 181 versation. I once said to a Bushman: "If you tell me this, you
 will get whatever you want." He answered: "Good, I shall speak
 157 and you will give me your automobile." Their imagination is
 123 very poor; in this respect they are much too accurate as observers
 of nature. Once a young Bushman woman with two children came
 to me and wanted to buy some sugar. I said to her: "I won't sell
 you anything, but you will get the sugar if you tell me some
 children's stories, for example, about animals." After some hesi-
 [538] tation she began the story of Arri, the guinea hen. It was no
 fairy tale, but a detailed account concerning this important food
 bird. She even imitated the calls of the guinea hen, "for exam-
 ple, when someone comes and there is danger, then they say,
 'gannana he gannana he,' but when they are alone and enjoying
 themselves, then they go 'gi gi gi.'" The children had to imi-
 [861] tate this until they were able to mimic the sound accurately.
 Then it was the turn of the sand hen, which says, "gi ganna gi
ganna"; then the ostrich, which goes, "hmm, hmm, hmm"; then
 the gum bird [Harzvogel], which says, "hai-dschi, hai-dschi,"
 and the owl, "mhm, m."

3. Posture, Movement, Stamina

- 516 As a result of his marked lordosis, the Bushman never as-
 sumes a posture that would conform to our military ideal; he
 almost always stands with his stomach somewhat protruding.

- 481 The way the Bushmen run is very peculiar and would
 justify detailed study. [25] The run is really a continuous fast
 walk, in which the legs are kicked forward, but the lower thighs
 are never brought back high, as is the case with our runners. The
 body is held as straight as possible, and the head up, not forward (1).

[113]

1. E. v. Eickstedt (Rassenkunde und
Rassengeschichte der Menschheit
[Ethnology and History of Mankind],
 p. 556) states: "The foot is put in a
 peculiar transverse position, which
 makes the track in the sand easily

⁸⁸⁸
⁶²¹ respect. In his family, the old man decided where the band would live.

● ¹⁵⁷ Lazy Kwi's sister-in-law was called "the old woman." Her name referred not to her age but to her bearing and her personality, for she was outspoken, positive, and sure, qualities that are seldom found in young Bushmen.

⁶⁰⁹ She was not at all surprised to see us. She took my ear to turn my head, and kissed me on the cheek. Lazy Kwi laughed when he greeted us, showing a gap in his mouth where a tooth was missing, and called me his wife, a joke among Bushman men, who pretend they will marry any woman who is not a tabu relative. His baby hugged my legs and showed a huge white smile, then held up his arms to be lifted. He had grown so that I could hardly get him off the ground.

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¹⁵⁹ Many Bushmen who greeted us had been at Gam when we had lived there, and among them was a young girl whose name was Ungka, a very common name; as she had no distinguishing nickname, we called her Beautiful Ungka, for so she was. She was probably the most beautiful girl in all Nyae Nyae, and even though she was only sixteen years old she already had a flaming past. When she was ten she was married to a man much older than herself, but, young as she was, she knew what she wanted, and because the old man filled her with loathing she cut off all her hair and all her ornaments, rubbed ashes on her face until she was filthy, and swore she would stay that way until her marriage was dissolved. Of course it wasn't long before her husband and her parents complied with her wishes and she became single once again.

⁵⁸³
¹⁵⁹ When she was about thirteen she attracted the attention of another much older man who was already married but who became so inflamed by her beauty that he begged her parents to give her to him as a second wife. This time her parents consulted with her, entreating her to marry him as

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people thought of her, she didn't leave her fire at night to go¹⁵⁹ visiting, even to the scherm right next to hers. Rather, if she⁵⁷⁷ had something to say, she would shout it across the werf.

Her deference to appearances and public opinion seemed¹⁵⁹ to make up for her faults, for she was considered to be al-¹⁵⁷
⁵⁹³ most a model personality in spite of her extremely jealous and vindictive moods which caused her to accuse others, quite unreasonably, of selfishness, greed, and other such things. Her husband and sons were not excepted, but this was something that Toma had learned to ignore. He would simply shrug his shoulders if she railed at him, pretend he didn't hear if she railed at others.

When she didn't assault her family with her tongue she¹⁵⁹ sometimes harmed them actively. Very often she would lie⁵⁹³ sullen with narrowed eyes in front of her scherm watching the other women walk out to the veld in the morning on their way to dig veld food, and on these days her husband and sons would eat nothing unless, driven by hunger, they went to the veld themselves, the three of them together, to dig up a few roots and eat them raw. Tu herself did not experience hunger as a result of these moods, for she would have saved herself a morsel from the day before. It was her right to do this: among Bushmen every root is owned by its digger and is shared only at its owner's wish.

Toma might ask but would never command Tu to feed her family, for as he had learned to ignore her biting tongue he had learned to accept her moods. This was his way, appeasing her, and because Toma wanted peace perhaps as much as he wanted Tu, he pampered her.

This was not always so. One day gossiping people told us¹⁵⁹ that early in their marriage Toma shot a fat kudu and Tu⁵⁷⁸
⁵⁹³ said: "Don't cook all the meat because my mother will be coming to visit us."

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the wind or passing feet had disarranged them; and the meat²²⁴₁₅₉ that resulted from his prolific hunting was never wasted, for¹⁵¹ he would bring other hunters to help him dry it, then carry it²⁵¹₄₇₆ off to a werf somewhere to share with others.

He knew the habits of animals from the ways of the largest¹⁵⁹ antelope all the way down to the smallest species of mice; in⁸²⁵ fact, he must have known animals very well, for he could always find them. He knew when he was in danger and when he was safe, and he was as brave as he was careful. Once, Short¹⁵⁹ Kwi, John, and two other hunters were tracking a bull wilde²²⁴₁₅₇ beast that one of the hunters had shot. They came upon it lying down, surrounded by a very large pride of lions. There were twenty or thirty lions in all, having got there first and claiming the wildebeest as their own, for the bushes were full of lions walking back and forth, watching several other lions brave the fallen wildebeest, still able to protect itself with its horns. The braver lions were standing near the wildebeest, obviously steeling themselves for the attack, when the hunters arrived. The Bushmen had followed the wildebeest's trail through thorns and over the parching desert and were not to be deprived, and, speaking softly to the lions, they said: "We know you are strong, Big Lions, we know you are brave, but this meat is ours and you must give it back to us."

Even after these words the lions did not give ground. Their round eyes watched the hunters and they began to growl, and the four men, quite unarmed except for their arrows and a spear (to use a spear would have been folly), said respectfully: "Great Lions, Old Lions, this meat belongs to us," and then advanced on the lions, throwing little stones and clods of dirt. The lions in the bushes began to back away, while the braver lions stood their ground until a clod struck one of them, causing him to huff and run back a little. At this, the courage of the other lions broke and they all turned and

159 scrambled for the safety of their companions, by now quite
224
157 far away.

The hunters, victorious in this battle of nerves, had the bull wildebeest all to themselves, but now found that they could not approach it either. Having fended off the lions (it thought), it now tried to lunge to its feet to fend off the men. Short Kwi borrowed the spear from its owner and hurled it into the wildebeest's neck, where it stuck fast. Now they had no weapon at all. Their arrows would be useless. The sticks and stones they threw at the spear did not dislodge it and all their efforts to retrieve it by creeping up on the wildebeest from behind did not succeed, for as soon as one of them would edge near enough to touch the spear the wildebeest would toss its horns so quickly that the man would have to jump back, grazed. At last, while one of the men distracted the wildebeest from the front, Short Kwi backed off and rushed at it, jumped over it, and, as he passed over its back, jerked the spear free. The bull lunged and the curved horns hooked upward, but too late. Short Kwi was gone. Wanting a picture, John asked Short Kwi to do it again, but Short Kwi shook his head. "This time he will remember," Short Kwi said, and dispatched the bull by hurling the spear into its throat.

159 Sometimes, as on these occasions, Short Kwi hunted with
224
593 others, but mostly he hunted alone. He knew every bush and
823 stone in the area of thousands of square miles that he ranged over, and he lived for hunting. Caring more for this, his passion, than for society, he often hunted as he did when we had first heard of him, alone in the veld with only his wife—a young woman who was intelligent and gay and almost pretty, to whom Short Kwi was devoted—his baby daughter, and his mother-in-law.

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previously noted, plays an important part in the usages relating to game shot with the bow and arrow, as well as in the first-fruits ceremony; while among the Kung he is similarly responsible for the ceremony performed before the edible bulbs of the new season may be gathered. There is no record of similar religious and economic functions being vested in the chief in other Bushman tribes, so that, in the present light of our knowledge, such customs cannot be regarded as common elements of Bushman culture; but in the tribes where they do occur they obviously show that the chief may, in fact, exercise a considerable influence in the life of the community. [184]

On the whole the chief appears to be essentially a leader rather than a ruler. His actual authority over the members of his band is very slight, and dependent to a considerable extent upon his personality. If, for example, he is a man of strong character, or possesses a gun, he will have a correspondingly greater influence; but the only special authority he has is over the members of his own family, and he has no power to enforce his will outside it. He has nothing in the way of judicial functions, nor does he exercise any organized control over the members of the band. Great freedom of action prevails within the band, and as a rule every adult man can do as he pleases, provided, of course, that he does not infringe against recognized law and custom. In general the head of each family has control over the movements of his wife or wives and children—and over the latter only while they are small. No one really controls grown-up sons and daughters. [157]

This absence of any organized system of public control does not imply that the Bushmen have no laws. On the contrary all their institutions, manners and customs serve to regulate the relations between the members of the band, and thus to maintain law and order. The child at birth comes into a world where there already exist definite forms of organization and behaviour, of ceremonial, of manners and fashions, and as he grows up he falls more or less unconsciously into acting and thinking like those around him, and in this way comes to conform to social norms. There are moreover more or less deliberate means of impressing upon young people the social sentiments necessary for the maintenance of the law and order of the community. The education they receive in the households of their parents and out in the veld, and above all the highly-important teachings at the puberty ceremonies for boys, instruct them in tribal lore and tradition, inculcate social norms, and determine their activities accordingly. [83] [867] [881]